

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07  
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-----035072 270649Z /23

R 261945Z JAN 78  
FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9991

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 0416

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: MPOL, MASS, MORG, PGOV, CS  
SUBJ: US-LATIN AMERICAN MILITARY RELATIONS

REF: 77 STATE 306726

1. EMBASSY RESPONSE TO QUESTIONNAIRE ON US-LATIN AMERICAN MILITARY RELATIONS IS GEARED TO QUESTIONS POSED IN PARA 2, SUBSECTIONS A-F OF REFTEL.

A. NORMAL US-COSTA RICAN RELATIONS ARE POSITED ON COSTA RICAN RELIANCE ON THE US AND ON THE INTER-AMERICAN TREATY OF RECIPROCAL DEFENSE FOR COSTA RICAN SECURITY FROM EXTERNAL ATTACK. COSTA RICANS VIEW THE PRESENCE OF A TWO-MAN OFFICE OF DEFENSE COOPERATION AND THE MODEST MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AS MANIFESTATIONS OF US WILL TO FULFILL THAT DEFENSE COMMITMENT. USG TIES WITH THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SECURITY AND THE CIVIL AND RURAL GUARD GIVE SUBSTANCE TO THIS UNIQUE DEFENSE/SECURITY RELATIONSHIP. ACCORDINGLY, THESE TIES ARE NOT DESIGNED NOR HAVE THEY DEVELOPED AS A SPECIAL AVENUE OF COMMUNICATIONS TO A SIGNIFICANT POWER GROUP OR AS A MEANS OF POLITICAL INFLUENCE. RATHER, THEY SERVE TO UNDERSCORE FOR COSTA RICANS THAT THE US ASSISTS AND STANDS READY TO HELP DEFEND THIS MILITARILY WEAK, BUT STRONGLY DEMOCRATIC SMALL COUNTRY.

STRICTLY DEFINED, THE US HAS NO VITAL SECURITY INTERESTS IN COSTA RICA. THE US DOES, HOWEVER, HAVE AN IMPORTANT FOREIGN POLICY INTEREST, WHICH DERIVES FROM COSTA RICA'S STATUS AS A PRACTICING  
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DEMOCRACY, LEADER IN HUMAN RIGHTS, AND SIGNIFICANT PARTICIPANT IN THE RESOLUTION OF HEMISPHERIC AND WORLD ISSUES. THE US ROLE IS TO SUPPORT THIS CIVILIAN-DOMINATED GOVERNMENT BY HELPING TO STRENGTHEN ITS SMALL AND RELATIVELY WEAK PUBLIC SECURITY FORCES.

B. IN ADDITION TO THE PRESENCE OF THE TWO-MAN ODC, THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE US MILITARY TO THE COSTA RICAN MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SECURITY AND TO THE CIVIL AND RURAL GUARD IS IN THE FOLLOWING

ONGOING PROGRAM:

(A) SALE OF SPARE PARTS AND AMMUNITION.

(B) PURCHASE UNDER FMS OF FIVE PATROL BOATS AND ARMAMENTS IN 1977-78.

(C) OCCASIONAL SALE OF SURPLUS EQUIPMENT UNDER EXCESS PROPERTY PROGRAM.

SERVICE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EMBASSY AND THE MINISTRY AND THE GUARDS ARE CONDUCTED PRIMARILY THROUGH THE ODC AND HIS COUNTER-PARTS. RELATIONSHIPS ARE EXCELLENT.

AS INDICATED IN PARA A, COSTA RICANS VIEW RELATIONSHIPS WITH US AS KEY TO THEIR NATIONAL SECURITY. (PRESIDENT ODUBER FREQUENTLY EMPHASISES THIS POINT TO CODELS AND OTHER VISITING DIGNITARIES.) AT SAME TIME COSTA RICANS TEND TO JUDGE THE US INTEREST AND COMMITMENT BY OUR ABILITY AND WILLINGNESS TO RESPOND TO THEIR NEEDS. ON THE DEFENSE SIDE, AND WITHIN THE CONSTRAINTS IN OUR SYSTEM THAT COSTA RICANS UNDERSTAND, THEY ARE HIGHLY SATISFIED WITH THE ONGOING RELATIONSHIP. ALTHOUGH THE CURRENT PROVCRPS PROVIDES EXTREMELY MODEST AMOUNTS OF FMS, FOR THE COSTA RICANS THIS IS SIGNIFICANT EVIDENCE OF US PRESENCE AND INTEREST.

C. WITHIN THE GUIDELINES OF CURRENT US POLICY, THE NEEDS OF THE COSTA RICAN SECURITY FORCES CAN BE MET BY US FLEXIBILITY IN RESPONSE TO COSTA RICAN SPECIFIC REQUEST. NO PURCHASES OF MAJOR DEFENSE EQUIPMENT UNDER FMS ARE FORESEEN FOR FY 1979; THE COSTA RICANS WILL CONTINUE TO NEED SPARE PARTS AND SMALL AMOUNTS OF AMMUNITION. THE ONLY EQUIPMENT IN WHICH THE GOCR MAY EXPRESS INTEREST IS THAT WHICH CAN BE OBTAINED THROUGH THE EXCESS PROPERTY PROGRAM.

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PROGRAM. THERE IS A POSSIBILITY, HOWEVER, THAT A NEW GOVERNMENT TO BE INAUGURATED IN MAY 1978 MAY WISH TO PURCHASE ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT (VEHICLES, COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT, ETC) TO UPGRADE THE CIVIL AND RURAL GUARDS.

D. IF THE ALREADY MODEST US MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM WERE REDUCED OR ELIMINATED, COSTA RICA WOULD CONTINUE TO WANT TO COUNT ON THE LIAISON FUNCTION OF THE OFFICE OF DEFENSE COOPERATION. WITHOUT THE ASSISTANCE, HOWEVER, THEY MIGHT FEEL THE NEED FOR SOME ASPECTS OF THE LIAISON LESS KEENLY. THE ODC OFFICE NOW PROVIDES THE GOCR INFORMATION ON THE PURCHASE OF A VARIETY OF EQUIPMENT, COORDINATED ASSISTANCE IN SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS, AND A SERVICE DEFENSE LINK WITH THE US WITH WHICH THEY FEEL COMFORTABLE.

EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE IT APPROPRIATE FOR FUTURE US LIAISON FUNCTION TO INCLUDE COUNSELING SERVICES RELATED TO PURCHASES FROM THIRD COUNTRIES; THERE IS NO SUCH NEED IN COSTA RICA. ALSO, BECAUSE THE PRESENT LIAISON FUNCTION IS LOW-KEY, EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT LOGISTICAL/MANAGEMENT TYPE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE COSTA RICAN SERVICE, WHICH WOULD RAISE THE IMAGE CONSIDERABLY, IS DESIRABLE. THERE IS AN ADDITIONAL REASON TO AVOID ASSISTANCE OF AN INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL NATURE--THE COSTA RICAN CIVIL AND RURAL GUARD HAVE POLICE FUNCTIONS IN ADDITION TO THEIR NATIONAL DEFENSE RESPONSIBILITIES.

E. PERSONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS SUCH AS INDIVIDUAL LEADERSHIP GRANTS AND ATTENDANCE AT US MILITARY ACADEMIES--WEST POINT, ANAPOLIS, AIR FORCE ACADEMY, COAST GUARD ACADEMY--CONTINUE TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN POSITIVELY INFLUENCING PRESENT AND FUTURE COSTA RICAN LEADERS ABOUT THE US. FOR EXAMPLE, SINCE 1951, 19 COSTA RICANS HAVE STUDIED IN THE SERVICE ACADEMIES; SOME OF THESE GRADUATES ARE TO BE FOUND IN IMPORTANT POSITIONS HERE. IN A SMALL COUNTRY SUCH AS THIS, WHERE WELL-TRAINED LEADERSHIP IN BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS MOVES TO THE TOP NBIRLY RAPIDLY, THE IMPORTANCE OF SUCH PERSONAL STUDY AND TRAINING PROGRAMS CANNOT BE OVER EMPHASIZED. THIS IS ESPECIALLY SO IN VIEW OF THE STEPPED-UP ACTIVITIES OF THE SOVIETS, CUBANS AND EAST EUROPEANS IN EXCHANGE PROGRAMS.

F. COSTA RICAN EXPENDITURES FOR ARMS PURCHASES FROM THIRD COUNTRY SUPPLIERS ARE NON-EXISTENT. AS LONG AS COSTA RICA CAN DEPEND UPON

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THE UNITED STATES FOR SMALL SUPPLIES OF AMMUNITION AND PERHAPS SMALL ARMS PURCHASES FOR MODERNIZING ITS CIVIAL AND RURAL GUARD, THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT COSTA RICA WILL TURN TO THIRD COUNTRY SUPPLIERS.

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## Message Attributes

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**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014